

My Own Story of My Torture by And My Escape From His Execution

By
Don Luis Terrazas Jr.
Son of
Mexico's
Richest
Citizen



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Don Luis Terrazas, Jr.—"Hair Whitened, Face Lined and Seamed,
Broken in Health, an Old Man at Fifty, Through the Per-
secution of Himself and His Family by Villa."



Dorotea Arango, Alias General
Francisco Villa—
"Brutal Face, Gimlet Eyes, in
Which Is Concentrated
So Much of Power and Evil;
Thick Lips, Gorilla
Chest and Hands of a Butcher."

The Most Remarkable Revelation Barbarous Anarchy in Bandi

IN the roster of cruelties and rapine, of murder and outrage that has made up the history of Mexico since the downfall of Porfirio Diaz, no chapter has so stirred the imagination of those who knew the facts as the merciless persecution of the Terrazas family of Chihuahua, and the systematic looting of their fortunes by "General" Pancho Villa.

The Terrazas family is one of the oldest and was the richest of the Spanish families in Mexico. General Luis Terrazas fought with Juarez, the Liberator, back in 1859, and resisted Maximilian when he invaded his country in 1865. When Mexico's present rule of anarchy began Don Luis owned five million to fifteen million acres of land in Chihuahua, and his wealth was estimated at anywhere from one hundred million to two hundred millions of dollars. His oldest son, Don Luis, Jr., was the heir of all this vast estate.

The old General, with his family, is to-day a fugitive in the United States. He is penniless. His estates have been confiscated by Villa and devastated. His son, Don Luis, Jr., after months of torture by Villa, escaped from Chihuahua prison on the very morning that he was to have been executed at Villa's command, and is now also in this country with his family, and also is penniless.

Fragmentary details of the ruin of the Terrazas have crept into print. But the real story of the persecution of this family and of its highbred men and gentlewomen has never been told. This newspaper is now able to print Don Luis Jr.'s own story of

what befell him and of the tortures to which the last remnants of his wife and daughter, a quarter of a million, disguised as I hands of Villa's mutabilities to which, once rich, have been of a fellow prisoner reward was the murder of the heroic women of Chihuahua prison while seeming to kill him. No such insight ever been afforded. Not the least important they will present of who, by force of his own country was on this side of the richest States in It must be remembered, worse, has been told. Luis was fortunate women. Many an installment of his s

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that crime nor what his motive or provocation was; I can only repeat what he himself told me on the day he faced me in my home in Chihuahua.

"Don Luis," he said, "I am not a vicious man. Circumstances have made me an outlaw. When I was a boy at my home in Durango a wealthy citizen betrayed my sister. Blind with rage, I killed him. Would you have done less? But he was powerful and I was nobody. I knew what would happen if I stayed, so I jumped on a horse and fled to the hills, then on into the Sierra Madre Mountains.

"It is true that I was a bandit, but when conditions changed I came to Chihuahua to earn an honest living. With my two brothers, Antonio and Hippolito, I had a butcher shop. But one whom I thought was my friend betrayed me and in a moment of rage and bitterness I killed him. Again I rode to the hills. Now I am a bandit no longer, but a reformed man. Do you believe me, Don Luis?"

He placed his hand upon my shoulder, as we both rose, and looked at me with strange intensity. Presently the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Do you believe me, Don Luis?" again he asked, and such an appeal for belief I had never heard.

"Yes, Colonel Villa, I believe you," I said.

By what uncanny power had he been able even for a moment to convince me? I am certain now that he must have been a marvelous actor, for the facts of that second murder to which he referred were still fresh in my mind and they did him no credit. He had not mentioned the name, but it was of Claro Reza he spoke.

Reza at one time had borne a bad reputation but, upon becoming a rurale and showing considerable zeal for law and order, his offenses had been condoned. I rather suspect it was his promise to bring Villa to justice that brought him into the good graces of the authorities, but be that as it may it was that task which they assigned to him. As residents of Chihuahua, Villa and Reza had known each other well; in fact, were closer than mere acquaintances.

Better Death in the Desert Than to Fall Into Villa's Hands

Reza was standing in front of a market on Cuatemoc avenue one morning and was just informing an officer of the rurales that he was on the point of arresting Villa when there appeared at one end of the street a man on a black horse.

He rode recklessly along the avenue, which is one of the principal thoroughfares in Chihuahua, and some of those who scattered before him caught a glimpse of his face. It was livid except where the thick lips cut it athwart in purple lines and his small eyes, they say, were points of incandescence. To those who knew him there was no mistaking the huge chest of the man and that peculiar effect of size and dominance by which he commanded the eye of the observer as well as the allegiance of soldiers.

"Villa, the butcher!" several exclaimed as he passed them, and the faces of many went gray with the premonition of a tragedy.

He reined his horse up sharply before Reza and, with the same movement, shot the rurale in the head.

A shout, a flourish of his revolver which menaced those who were near, spurred set to his horse and Villa was away to the hills.

When he returned it was as a colonel under General Pascual Orozco, Jr., who had occupied Chihuahua City with his troops, and it was during that period I had several conversations with him.

Before taking up the thread of my personal narrative may I digress for a moment to refresh the reader's recollection of events in Mexico? It will be remembered that five revolutions swept over my country between the years 1910 and 1914—first, Madero against Diaz, then Orozco against Madero, then Huerta against Madero, then Carranza and Villa against Huerta, and, last, Villa against Carranza.

It is still a matter of vivid history to those who were touched by the events that Villa, fighting as an ally of General Carranza, attacked Chihuahua City in November, 1913, and was repulsed by the Federals.

But with that lightning rapidity which characterized his strategy he entrained for Juarez, surprised the garrison and captured the city. We who were in Chihuahua heard reports of his wanton acts of murder, torture and bestiality and thanked God and our strong defending force that our city had been spared a similar experience.

But who could have a feeling of security in those days? News that Villa had opened Juarez, the gateway of the north, to his unrestrained army, had scarcely come to us in Chihuahua when the former bandit with his strangely assorted following was on his way back to the capital of the state. We had no fear, however; Villa had been defeated once; this time, we felt, he would be crushed. But a surprising thing happened.

General Mercado, who was commanding the garrison, decided that his forces were insufficient to withstand the attack and abandoned the city. This was most unjustified. To this error he added another equally grave. He had been advised to go

to Torreon; instead he ordered his troops to Chihuahua City. The surprised Mercado's column went with him on this evil errand, with babes in their arms, hardships of that frightful visit from Villa.

The cold was terrible. Hunger, disease and death. Many women and children were so great that the men said, "Better death this way than be taken by them."

I Stay Behind in and Am Arrested

Those who saw the plight as the most pitiable of fathers, General Luis Terrazas was of that company and United States. The acts merely sketched, were I who, with my brothers, all personally, I felt there were Villa's professions of friendship under Orozco. So, acting on his word, I remained in Chihuahua, the who was eighty years of their families, my wife and sons were in the United States also there, two attending S City.

On December 8, 1913, V now General Francisco Villa and position since the day of Durango, he had murdered What a change also since Chihuahua City!

I felt that foreigners if I took refuge with Colbert mirable gentleman and a night there without any few passing annoyances.

But in the morning I feet upon the stones of the window, I saw a detach in number. A Lieutenant.

The officer knocked upon the consul himself having I "What do you wish of I Quickly came the reply:

"Why should you seek steadily at the Lieutenant. "General Villa has heard and I am directed to take I can tell you nothing will wait here until Mr. S. The officer, with a word they prepared to wait."

Mrs. Scobell closed the who was at the Foreign C utes the consul came. Fir "Don Luis, Villa has sen do not want to go I will I.

He was a man of courage that I was under his protection there was no reason why I upon him. Villa evidently on guard there was no pos I so desired. But what dan "Do not fear for me," I harmed Villa, and his set but that of an enemy." So

"Have you any money?" I examined my pockets aldered sufficient for imme As I left my room, Ellis and Mrs. Powell, his aunt, sympathetic movement to But at the door, as I w into tears.

This surprised me and many stories about Villa's them. I do not know who He will not harm me."

I walked out to the Lieutenant. He was sever myself in the midst of his to the Palace.

When we arrived in fr mount the stairs the lieut

By Don Luis Terrazas, Jr.

AS I search for a point at which to begin the narrative of the extraordinary series of misadventures which befell me and mine in Mexico, two pictures stand forth in my mind. In the first rises the brutal face of Francisco Villa, with its gimlet eyes and thick lips. It was an evil day when he came to my house in Chihuahua City, and I feel that our acquaintance, begun then, somehow brought to pass the train of events which followed.

Here is the scene which I so clearly recall: He is sitting before me, half slouched over in the low chair and with his soiled felt hat held unasily in one of his thick, butcher hands. The collar of his shirt is open, showing the hairy chest, a great gorilla of a thorax. He tells me of how, when he was a boy of sixteen, living in Durango, a wealthy citizen violated his sister of whom he was very fond. As he proceeds his teeth grate upon each other and those small, gimlet eyes, in which is concentrated so much of power and evil, grow smaller and more terrible.

"I killed him, Don Luis," he says, and his words come with so much harshness that it is as though they had been of stone issuing from a throat of iron.

The second picture concerns a later time. It is equally vivid. Villa's soldiers have just come for me and I am on my way through the streets of Chihuahua to meet their commander in the Palace. I have no fear; I have done nothing. The sun is shining, the day is beautiful and I am serene. As I walk along, confident that no injury or misfortune awaits me, I pass the house of my father, General Luis Terrazas, and upon looking up to the balcony I see my beloved sister, Luisa, standing there. She starts, places a hand suddenly upon her heart and bursts into tears.

Had she, with her woman's intuition, the power to see what was hidden from me? I now accept her terror as proof that she understood something of what awaited me and my family, but neither she nor anyone could foresee what has actually come to pass, nor could anyone have imagined happenings more grotesque and at the same time more terrible than those of which I and those dearest to me were the victims.

I can trace it all back to Pancho Villa, he who had had a butcher's shop in the city of Chihuahua; who, in cold fury, had shot down two men; who had been a bandit in the Sierra Madre fastnesses; who became a colonel in the revolutionary army of Pascual Orozco, Jr., and, finally, who stood forth upon a veritable mountain of crimes as the Red Terror of the North.

To this ruthless being of strange composition, with his stiff, upstanding, kinky hair, his tremendous jungle chest, his thick-lipped, cruel mouth and his genius to command malcontents, I owe that night at La Junta de los Rios, in which they hanged me to a tree; it is to him I owe the months of horror in the State Penitentiary of Chihuahua and the despoliation of the great properties of our family.

But there is a credit side to the ledger with entries of a different kind. There is a story of fidelity and heroism which I shall tell. And in it appear the name and deeds of a courageous and beautiful young woman of Mexico, who matched her genius of goodness against the evil power of Pancho Villa and enabled me, in the most astonishing manner, to escape from prison. And yet even that heroic episode had its counter-weight of tragedy, for the life of her husband was sacrificed in the dramatic crisis which burst upon us.

In my narrative I shall not discuss politics. I am going to deal only with my own personal experiences and what I saw. I shall begin with Pancho Villa, because it is to him, his treachery and the power he radiated by sheer force of personality over northern Mexico that I attribute what befell me.

This man's name is really Doroteo Arango. He was born not in Chihuahua, as is generally supposed, but in the little town of San Juan Del Rio, in the State of Durango. He was sixteen when he committed his first murder—I wonder how many there are now upon his red record! I do not know the circumstances of